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THOUGHTS BEFORE MARRIAGE.

A MONOLOGUE,

In One Act.

By Jules de Maithold

CORRECTLY PRINTED FROM THE PROMPTER'S COPY, WITH THE CAST OF CHARACTERS, COSTUMES, SCENE AND PROPERTY PLOTS, RELATIVE POSITIONS OF THE DRAMATIS PERSONÆ, SIDES OF ENTRANCE AND EXIT, DISPOSITIONS OF CHARACTERS, ETC., ETC.

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THOUGHTS BEFORE MARRIAGE.

—:O:—

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MARIE.

—

COSTUMES. — MODERN.

—

PROPERTIES.

Bed-room furniture complete. Window, with curtains. Small bed, with curtains. Crucifix. Fireplace, with mantel and clock on it. Small chest of drawers, with writing-desk on it. Large letter in writing-desk, and other papers. At foot of bed prie-dieu. Small table. A larger table, on which is a camel's hair shawl and turquise necklace. A wedding-dress, and orange blossom wreath placed over two chairs. Lighted lamp. Materials for mixing a glass of sugar and water. Looking-glass.

—

EXPLANATION OF THE STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R., means first entrance right, and right. L, first entrance left, and left. S.E.R., second entrance right. S.E.L., second entrance left. T.E.R., third entrance right. T.E.L., third entrance left. F.E.R., fourth entrance right. F.E.L., fourth entrance left. U.E.R., upper entrance right. U.E.L., upper entrance left. R.F., right flat, L.F., left flat. R.C., right of centre. L.C., left of centre. C., centre. C.D., centre doors. C.R., centre towards right. C.L., centre towards left. Observing you are supposed to face the audience.

THOUGHTS BEFORE MARRIAGE.

SCENE.—*A Bed-Room. Door, L. Window, R., with curtains. Small bed, curtains, and crucifix. At S.E.L., fireplace, and mantel-piece with clock. At R., small chest of drawers, with writing desk on it. At foot of bed, prie-dieu. At head of bed, small table. A table, on which is a camel's hair shawl and turquoise necklace. A wedding-dress laid over two chairs, and orange-blossom wreath laid on it.*

Enter MARIE, quickly, door L., lamp in hand—speaks off to back of the scenes, holding door half open.

Marie. Yes, mamma, I am going to bed at once—at once—at once. Don't worry about me—to sleep—to sleep! Good night, darling mamma. Good-bye—till to-morrow! (*Kisses her hand, shuts door—stands quite still for a moment*) To bed—to sleep—till to-morrow. (*Putting lamp on table near bed.*) To bed, certainly, but—to sleep? Ah, that I won't answer for. (*Sighs.*) To-morrow, I am to be married to Monsieur de—(*Correcting herself, and with an attempt at ease*)—to Henry, my fiancé. Married? I? Who ever would have thought it? What a complete change this will make in the house! I shall have a husband; isn't it funny? (*Laughs.*) A man who will call me "wife," and say "dear" to me! No one has ever yet called me "my dear" but papa and mamma—oh, yes, and my uncle—and to-morrow—gracious, I shall have to say "dear" to him! Oh, I never shall dare to, the first time, My cousin Henrietta did not say "dear" to her husband until she had been married eleven days—and

she is by no means timid—she always took the gymnastic prize at school—so that she must have been pretty bold. I shall be called madame, like mamma. Oh, that, *I own*, will delight me beyond anything. Why I feel myself getting red at the very idea. (*Bowing to herself as it were.*) Madame—everyone will call me madame, even my schoolmates. I shall be spoken of as madame. I shall be written to as madame. The first letter that I receive with madame on the envelope I shall preserve carefully in my writing-desk. (*Turns up lamp.*) What's the matter with this lamp? It won't burn. (*Taking large letter from writing-desk.*) I stole one of our wedding invitation cards, and here it is! (*Reading indistinctly.*) "Monsieur and Madame request the honor of your company at the marriage of Mademoiselle—(*Stopping*)—Mademoiselle!" Fortunately, I shan't have myself called that much longer. Mademoiselle—Mademoiselle—is very nice at first, when they cease calling you "my little girl," or "my child," or "little one," even little one! There was an old gentleman who used to come here who had a mania for calling me "little one." How I did hate it! Poor man, he's dead. I was very fond of him. What a pity it is that he died. He would have been at my wedding to-morrow, and would have called me madame. I'm sure it would have pleased him! (*Sigh.*) Ah, it would have pleased us both! (*Putting back envelope in writing-desk, and looking at wedding-dress.*) I've never been dressed in white, except on the day of my first communion; to-morrow will be the second time. White is very becoming to me, although Madame d'Arquenev-Joyeuse pretends that it only looks well on dark-haired people—because she's dark. My wreath! (*Holding it over her head.*) Well, I'm fair, and does not this wreath become me? (*Looking at it with air of curiosity.*) I wonder why young brides always wear orange blossoms? I suppose there must be a reason, but—(*To lamp*—pshaw! how the old lamp is smoking! (*Pause, pensive.*) I am going to say "yes" to-morrow. Now that yes is very funny—to-morrow's yes! How ought I to say it? Not too loud—certainly not, in a church—but not too soft either. Oh, I shall be dreadfully frightened, I know I shall! Stop! I've got an idea. I'll shut my eyes! (*Imitating half-smothered tone of priest, indistinctly.*) "Monsieur, will you take mademoiselle for your wedded wife?" Oh, he—he will answer boldly, *Yes*. I can hear him now with his lovely voice—so sweet and serious. (*In same priest-like manner.*) "Mademoiselle, will you take monsieur to be your wedded husband?" (*Shutting eyes.*) Oh, my eyes! (*In a half-smothered voice.*) Y-e-s! (*Fretfully.*) Oh, that's not it, at all—I've lost the pitch. I'll try again. Following the words of the priest softly to myself, I shall only have to answer—for him. (*Mutters in a deep voice.*) "Monsieur, will you take mademoiselle to be your wedded wife?" "Yes." Now for myself. (*With squeaky voice.*) "Mademoiselle, will you take monsieur to be your wedded husband?" Yes. (*Angrily.*) Pshaw, that's not the voice. (*Quickly, dull voice.*) Yes. That's not it either; it sounds as if I was con-

fessing a crime. (*Very softly, whistling voice.*) Yes. Oh, dear, that's worse than ever! (*Humbly.*) Yes. One would think I was afraid of a beating. Yes-s. (*Mocking herself.*) Yes-s-s. I'm getting worse and worse. (*Pause.*) It certainly is very difficult, and yet how simple it seems—three letters—y e s, as simple as a b c—and yet it really is very complicated. I shall be inspired at the proper moment, and the courage of despair will come to my aid. Besides, if these should fail me, why, from the moment that I think of—(*With enthusiasm; hand on heart*)—ah, and I shall think a great deal. (*Exultingly.*) Yes! (*Seizing idea quickly, and repeating.*) Yes! Ah, that's perfect! (*Shaking her head.*) Yes, but to-morrow I shall not be here alone. Never mind. If I dared, I would ask mamma how *she* said it on her wedding-day—but she would only laugh at me. No, I don't dare to, and then probably she has forgotten. (*Clock strikes once.*) Eh, what's that? Half-past three! It's not possible! Yes—the fact is, mamma and I talked together for some time, and I did not come to my room until very late—past one o'clock. I must go to bed. I'm no longer astonished that the lamp—(*Turning it up again*)—poor lamp, I am going to leave you. My room has a very strange effect on me to-night. When I look at my tables and chairs I feel like crying. It seems to me as if I were going on a voyage far away. I feel as if already the room was but a memory. (*After a long absorbed pause, takes off bell, and mixes a glass of sugar and water.*) I feel feverish and uneasy, and what makes me? Oh, I know! It is this sleepless night! I wish mamma was here. She is asleep, perhaps. I saw her crying this morning. I am going to leave her. Marriage is much more serious than it appears at first. (*She kneels on prie-dieu, with face in her two hands—long pause, then crosses herself.*) Oh, merciful Mary, thou who art most blessed above all women—(*Pause*)—but my poor people are going to lose me. They will not know what has become of me, they will be uneasy and not understand what it all means, they will be very unhappy. They will think me ungrateful. The Abbé Duplantelle is right. The poor are a sacred charge. (*Pause—prays.*) “Thou who art blessed above all women.” (*Pause—rising and standing pensively, with arms down, and hands clasped.*) Oh, if I could but have one year more—one year! (*She comes forward slowly, head down.*) We were to have left here to-morrow for Italy, but we shall not go now for a month, which delights me, for we shall have time to pay our wedding visits before our departure. (*Going to table and taking camel's hair shawl.*) It is only the end of April now, and I shall put on my camel's hair shawl. A camel's hair! What happiness! One is no longer a girl with that on her shoulders. She is called “Madame” by every one, even passers-by, if they should have occasion to speak to her. For example, an awkward man apologizes for stepping upon her train, (*holding the shawl far off from her*) like this—(*Carelessly*)—“Excuse me, mademoiselle;” (*throwing the shawl over her shoulders, and drawing herself up seriously,*) like this—(*With earnestness*)—“A thousand

pardons, madame." A camel's hair shawl is really what marks the difference between a married woman and a young girl. (*With intense delight.*) How well I look in it! (*Looking at herself as she walks about.*) My husband says that it's very hard to wear a camel's hair shawl gracefully; that in that respect it is like a man's dress-coat. He wears a dress-coat most gracefully. (*Looking at herself in the glass.*) It seems to me I can see us both now, paying visits. (*Acting the scene—curtseying.*) Monsieur, Madame. You are going to travel, madame, I hear? Yes, madame. Are you not afraid of traveling, madame? Oh, no, madame; I enjoy it exceedingly. I shall be a week in Paris on my return to see my mother, and from there shall go to Tréport or to my husband's place in Touraine. (*Speaking in natural tone.*) And we shall get into our carriage and begin the same thing somewhere else. The other day I was at the Princess Rodowna's when a young married couple came in. I listened, and it was something like this that they talked. Colonel de Montegron is to be my husband's best man to-morrow. I wonder how he will be dressed! I hope in uniform. He is very brave—and has many decorations, which will make him look splendid. Then again, some one said before me that Monsieur and Madame Montelos were going to be separated. I asked why, and the reply was because they didn't love each other any longer. Then husband and wife can cease to love each other! How can that be? Does one ever stop loving one's mother? Their answer to my question, I remember, seemed simple and natural, as much as to say, "Because they had somewhere to go, and did not take the same road!" And then they all laughed. Separation! It's so queer, so—why, it makes me have a sort of feeling that people suddenly go mad! It's like a man going up in a balloon, and, after reaching a certain height, breaking it on purpose—it was not worth while his going up at all! Oh, heavens! Suppose my husband should cease to lo—(*Stops short—pause*)—how can I manage to know beforehand? (*Takes up necklace.*) I've got an idea! I've been told that the turquoise is a remarkable stone—which changes its color according to the feeling of the wearer—bright blue when she is happy—pale and greenish-looking, even breaking, when she is unhappy—when she is no longer loved. Let me see. (*Looking at it joyfully.*) Oh, they are the most beautiful blue—blue as the heavens. (*Stops suddenly.*) But I forgot—how silly I am, they have just come from the jeweller's. I've never worn them myself, which of course I must do before I can find out my fate. I would give anything in the world to know whether (*very softly*) he will always love me—always. (*Strikes forehead.*) Oh, I know! If there are an even number, he will and if uneven—I'll count them. Perhaps I am doing very wrong to believe in such nonsense. I don't care, I shall feel satisfied if it is even; and if it is uneven—why, I sha'n't attach any importance to such an absurd superstition. (*Counting.*) Two—four—six—eight. Oh, how my heart beats! Suppose there should be eleven—or fifteen—or nineteen—or—(*Counting*)—ten—twelve—fourteen—

sixteen—(Joyfully)—eighteen—even! He will always love me! Eighteen! Oh, how happy I am! (Kissing necklace again and again.) Eighteen—eighteen—eighteen! I must take care not to break one, for then there would only be seventeen. Eighteen! I was so frightened while I was counting. (Bravely.) But now—(Uneasily and wearily)—oh, I don't know what is the matter with me. I—all these fears, and hopes, and—I can't breathe—I want air. (Draws back curtains—daylight—with a cry of surprise.) Good gracious! Why, it's daylight. (Opens window.) And all the birds are up. Why, what o'clock can it be? (Looks at clock—stupefied.) Six o'clock! Oh, but then it's not to-morrow, it's—it's to-day! To-day! Just now I was laughing and crying at the same time in anticipation of it. Mamma will be coming soon to wake me. Poor mamma, it will be for the last time. (Buries her face in handkerchief and sobs—then raises her head and sees herself in glass.) Well, I look lovely, I must confess, for a wedding-day, with my face pale and red eyes! Oh, well—I'll say that I slept badly—that's all. It's very natural, (Kisses necklace again.) Eighteen! Oh, what happiness! Mademoiselle for the last time, and Madame for the first! Four—eight—twelve—sixteen—eighteen! (Kisses necklace.) Yes, I'm happy—happy!

(Exit L.)

CURTAIN.



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